

## THE COMMON SERVICE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

LUTHER D. REED  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

THE year 1938 has brought a round of liturgical anniversaries. Four hundred fifteen years ago (1523) Luther published his greatest liturgical writing, the *Formula Missae*. In this he gave an objective, evangelical criticism of the Roman Mass and established the principles upon which the Lutheran—and largely the later Anglican—reconstruction of worship was effected.

Fifty years ago (1888) the Common Service was first published. Twenty years ago (1918) the *Common Service Book*, built upon the principles and extending the forms of the Common Service, provided the United Lutheran Church with a complete Service Book and Hymnal at its first convention in New York City.

Our attention will be focused here primarily upon the Common Service, with occasional reference to the *Common Service Book*. We shall view these achievements in their relation to the life of the church as a whole.

### A NOBLE ANCESTRY

The Common Service is directly descended from a noble liturgical ancestry. It is not an isolated, independent order of worship, a mere series of "worship programs" containing liturgical tidbits culled eclectically from ancient sources and combined synthetically with original ingredients by a few gentlemen of taste and ability. The Common Service is a liturgy—the historic liturgy of the Lutheran Church adapted to the requirements of congregations worshiping in the English language.

This anniversary occasion calls for genuine recognition, but not for exaggeration. I am guilty of no exaggeration when I say that the Common Service stands before us today a work of signifi-



cant stature and importance—thoroughly grounded in history, doctrine, and life; full-scaled in plan and beautifully elaborated in detail; rich with the spiritual experience of centuries and yet responsive to the needs and conditions of today; a significant achievement of American Lutheranism; a complete and consistent embodiment in our own language of one of the four great, historic liturgies of Christendom.

The principles which determined its preparation rooted it in "the pure Lutheran liturgies of the sixteenth century." This century is so important for us because it was the crucial, creative period in which, under the leadership of eminent theologians and churchmen, principles were clarified and classic Confessions and fundamental orders of worship produced.

Luther brought the meaning and power of the Reformation home to the common man by his translations of the Bible, his catechism, his hymns, and his reconstruction of the liturgy. The rulers of the different states introduced the Reformation and reorganized the church by means of the Church Orders. These contained statements of doctrine, forms of worship, and regulations concerning schools, property, discipline, care of the poor, etc. They were prepared by commissions of theologians, jurists, and educators. The men who helped frame the Confessions supervised the preparation of the Orders. More than one hundred Orders were issued between 1523 and 1555. Differing in minor details, they were pervaded by an inner unity.

A few, less than half a dozen, may be thought of as ultra-conservative. These retained as many as possible of the pre-Reformation forms and ceremonies. Another small group, in southern and southwestern Germany, gives evidence of Zwinglian or Calvinistic influence. They are known as mediating or radical. By far the larger number, particularly those of central and northern Germany, together with the liturgy of Sweden, were consistent, conservative reforms of the ancient doctrine and worship of the church.

So far as the liturgy is concerned, no new rite was prepared. The historic liturgy became evangelical. The people made it their



own as they were encouraged to sing the service and newly composed hymns in their own language. Beyond this, there was a new content, a new spirit. Worship had found its soul and that soul was the Word of God. Its forms and its action comprehended and centralized the Word and the Sacraments. This conception gave worship strong sacramental character. Other elements—hymns, prayers, etc.—were but natural and thankful responses to these divine gifts of grace. Ceremonial, lights, vestments, richness of form, etc., became secondary considerations. There was no Puritan idea that spirituality could be attained only by austerity and plainness. Rather was it believed that the essential spirit and purpose of worship could be expressed either simply or richly.

The reform of worship developed a comprehensive program which included extensive use of Scripture, effective preaching, congregational hymns and chorales, and the composition of artistic choral music. Luther himself set Spangenberg to the task of preparing his monumental *Cantionale* with its rich collection of music for choirs, and Melancthon wrote the preface to a similar work by Lucas Lossius. This Lutheran development of church music continued for two centuries after the Reformation. It transferred musical leadership from Italy to Germany and culminated in the mighty works of Johann Sebastian Bach. The sixteenth century, particularly, was an era of doctrinal reform and creative liturgical development. The next two centuries witnessed a great decline in church life and worship.

#### DIFFICULT TIMES

Disintegrating forces brought church life throughout Europe to a low ebb in the seventeenth century. The Thirty Years' War desolated Germany. Pastors were driven into exile, churches closed, books and music burned, and all traditions of liturgical culture well nigh lost throughout large areas. During the period which followed, a form of dogmatic scholasticism and governmental bureaucracy held church life and worship to mechanical levels. The earlier forms were partially restored, but the spirit which had animated faith and worship was not recaptured.



A reaction came with Pietism. This promoted higher standards of morality, encouraged study and distribution of the Scriptures, improved methods of education, and stimulated missionary endeavor and practical benevolence. With all this to its credit, its over-emphasis upon the subjective and the personal adversely affected public worship. Undertaking to supplement the regular services of the church, it soon supplanted them by private meetings. In public worship itself, personal and subjective types of prayer and hymnody were substituted for the more formal and historic utterances of the whole church.

The lack of intellectual strength in Pietism left the field open for Rationalism. Essentially an expression of humanism, in opposition to supernaturalism and divine revelation, its influence was wholly destructive. Pietism had rejected many of the ancient forms but had not denied their content. Rationalism rejected content and form alike. The service was mutilated, the church building became a mere place of assembly, and the pulpit a lecture platform. The Sacrament was reduced to an empty form observed in Zwinglian fashion four times a year. Influences from Geneva allied themselves with the spirit of the age. Lengthy moralizings replaced the ancient prayers, and the old hymns were modernized. A flood of private agendas and liturgical forms supplanted the historic services. Rationalism was a possible system of philosophy but an impossible religion.

Space has been given to enumerating these destructive influences because the cumulative effects of two centuries of internal disintegration, aided by unfavorable influences from the Reformed tradition, are not generally appreciated. The Lutheran Church was transplanted to America during this time of spiritual and liturgical poverty in Europe. The revival of faith and church life here, as there, had to make its way against powerful odds. Had these adverse forces not been so strong, so universal, or so long continued, the church would be farther along today in the recovery of its ancient heritage in worship, church music, and liturgical art.

The ninety-five theses of Claus Harms, published in 1817, pointed the way to recovery. King Frederick William III studied



the sixteenth century agenda and issued his orders of service in 1822. Theodore Kliefoth, Heinrich Alt, J. W. F. Hoefling, H. A. Koestlin, Ludwig Schoeberlein, Max Herold, and many others led the revival which produced liturgies and hymnals based upon Reformation models. Romanticism added its strength to the movement. Mendelssohn discovered the forgotten works of Bach; the early Lutheran composers were studied again and interest in pure church music was greatly stimulated. Wilhelm Loehe founded his deaconess institutions and his theological seminary in Bavaria. His *Agende*, brought to America by his students, strongly influenced the framers of the Common Service and scholars like Krauth, Walther, Henry E. Jacobs, and others.

The Oxford Movement in England was part of this nineteenth century revival. The Lutheran Church in America is indebted to developments both on the continent and in England. The revival in Germany has influenced us through our common faith; the revival in England, through our common language, literature, and art.

#### IN THE NEW WORLD

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg arrived in America in 1742. When we remember that he came from Pietistic circles in Halle and that he labored here with groups on the very frontier of civilization, it is astonishing that he should have concerned himself with the preparation of a liturgy. His sense of historical and devotional values, however, and his statesmanlike insight led him at once into this field. His liturgy of 1748 was based upon the Church Order of St. Mary's German Lutheran congregation in London and upon the Orders of Saxony, Calenberg, Magdeburg, and Lueneburg, with which he and Brunnholz had been familiar. These were typical Lutheran liturgies which had suffered but little change since their preparation in the sixteenth century.

Muhlenberg's liturgy, while revealing Pietistic strains in a few places, was an admirable, if concise, example of the historic, conservative type of service found throughout northern Germany and Scandinavia in the sixteenth century. It existed only in manuscript, but all ministers were required to make copies and to use it.



It referred the pastors to the *Marburg Hymnbook* for the historic Gospels and Epistles and the series of Collects originally prepared by Veit Dietrich. Its individual parts and arrangement are practically that of the Common Service. The chief differences, besides the Collect series already mentioned, are the omission of the Introit, the combining of the Kyrie with the Confession, the use of a metrical Gloria in Excelsis and a metrical Creed, and a shortened form of the Sanctus. The determination and steadfastness of Muhlenberg and his associates in preparing and using a creditable liturgy under the circumstances is remarkable. It would have been a blessing if it could have remained in use.

The first printed service of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, 1786, introduced departures which resulted in confusion and weakness. The low point in an unhistorical and un-Lutheran type of service was reached during the late Rationalistic period in the New York Liturgy of 1818. Calvinistic and other non-liturgical influences from dominant English-speaking communions also adversely affected our church life during much of the nineteenth century. The church was confused in practice as well as in doctrine, and the abnormal came to be thought of as the normal.

The inevitable reaction developed under the leadership of members of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania into which body Beale M. Schmucker, Joseph A. Seiss and Charles Porterfield Krauth had recently been admitted from the Virginia Synod. These men strove to give the church a really good liturgy and hymnal in the *Church Book* which the General Council approved at its first convention in 1867. This was the first successful attempt to return to the Muhlenberg type of service. Its details—Introits, Collect, etc.—were elaborated by reference to sixteenth century Orders. In this it anticipated the principle which prevailed in the preparation of the Common Service twenty years later.

The movement which produced the Common Service was part of the doctrinal and historical revival which lifted the church in Germany and in England out of spiritual depression and liturgical poverty. Muhlenberg's letter of November 5, 1783, four years before his death, was probably forgotten. He had written: "It



would be a most delightful and advantageous thing if all the Evangelical Lutheran congregations in North America were united with one another, if they all used the same order of service." In 1870, however, Dr. John Bachmann of Charleston, S. C., urged the southern synods to confer with other general bodies with a view to securing greater uniformity in worship. Six years later, upon the motion of the Rev. J. B. Remensnyder, then of Savannah, overtures were made to the General Synod North and the General Council. In 1879 the latter promised co-operation upon the basis of the rule, "the common consent of the pure Lutheran liturgies of the sixteenth century," which was later adopted by all the bodies.

Actual work began April 17, 1884, when B. M. Schmucker, E. J. Wolf, S. A. Repass, T. D. Dosch, G. U. Wenner, and Edward T. Horn met in the latter's study in Charleston, S. C. The first meeting of the full Joint Committee was held in the Library of the Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, May 12-14, 1885. F. W. Conrad, A. C. Wedekind, M. Valentine, and G. U. Wenner represented the General Synod; B. M. Schmucker, J. A. Seiss, H. E. Jacobs, A. Spaeth, Samuel Laird, and John Kohler represented the General Council; S. A. Repass and Edward T. Horn represented the General Synod South. Dr. Schmucker was elected chairman and Mr. Horn secretary.

#### PRINCIPLES AND PERSONALITIES

A sixteen-page pamphlet containing the Order of Service with a preliminary statement of principles and with historical notes was next adopted by the three bodies. The sub-committee—Dr. Schmucker and Messrs. Wenner and Horn—was authorized to complete details. Congratulating Mr. Horn in a letter dated October 23, 1885, Dr. Schmucker said: "I had not the least hope of such achievement when it was proposed, and only entered into the preliminary work under the rule of my official life to do in any case what is the right thing without regard to the result. But no one can more highly estimate the importance of the result. If the coming generations of Lutherans have put into their mouths and hearts the pure, strong, moving words of our church's Service from week



to week and year to year, they will be brought up in the pure teaching of the church, and the church of the future will be a genuine Lutheran Church."

The sub-committee now met for lengthy periods in Roanoke, Va., Pottstown, Pa., Charleston, S. C., etc. A second meeting of the Joint Committee considered points of difference in Philadelphia, March 22-28, 1887. Agreement was reached on practically every one except the relative position of the Lord's Prayer and the Verba, a disagreement which led to the publishing of the Common Service in three separate editions. The service books of the three bodies, while incorporating the Common Service, retained their separate Ministerial Acts, hymns, and other material. But even agreement to this extent was a solid achievement.

The full Joint Committee held but two general meetings. The members of the sub-committee were responsible for critical studies and the selection and arrangement of material. The church should ever hold these three men in high honor. While moving freely and confidently among the Latin and German originals with which they had to work, they were masters of English expression. Though knowing the history of the church in Europe, they were American-born and free from provincial prejudices or preferences.

Dr. Beale M. Schmucker (1827-1888) was fifty-seven years of age when the sub-committee began its work. He came of a distinguished ministerial line. His father, Dr. Samuel Simon Schmucker, was a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and of Princeton Theological Seminary. For many years he was president of the Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. The son, after graduating from the College and Seminary at Gettysburg, was ordained by the Virginia Synod and served pastorates in Virginia and Pennsylvania. His mastery of principles and his maturity of judgment carried great weight. The Preface to the Common Service stands today as he wrote it, an admirable example of his scholarship and literary ability. After Dr. Schmucker's death his young colleague in the sub-committee wrote of the earnest and continuous labor that "stretched over twelve years" and of the extensive correspondence it involved. Referring to Dr. Schmucker's



letters, Dr. Horn says: "They awakened my old wonder at the readiness with which he gave into our hands life-long studies and made ours what no other one of the committee could have gotten with equal devotion. And I remember that his fairness and unselfishness in committee and out of it revealed a beauty in his character that we had overlooked before in our regard for the scholar and admiration of the churchman."

Dr. George Unangst Wenner (1844-1934) was a graduate of Yale University and Union Theological Seminary. His keen mind and critical spirit, and his able advocacy of the plan of the Common Service in the General Synod, contributed greatly to the success of the work. For more than twenty years he was chairman of the Liturgical Committee of the General Synod. His solid articles in the church periodicals refuted hostile criticism from within his own group. He was a leader in establishing the deaconess work in the General Synod and a pioneer in the field of weekday religious education. After a remarkable pastorate of sixty-six years at Christ Church, New York City, he died but four years ago in his ninety-first year. It is known to many that Dr. Wenner's later years witnessed a reaction from some of his earlier positions. He opposed, ineffectually, the adoption of the *Common Service Book* by the General Synod. He objected particularly to the Confiteor, the Introit, the insertion of definite rubrics, etc., and to the position of the Lord's Prayer before the Words of Institution, a feature which he had always ably protested. Manuscript notes among his literary remains are interesting, at times humorous. Concerning the Introit, which he had helped to secure in complete series for the Common Service, he writes: "For lovers of art and musical content it would be a pity to lose it, . . . but as the Scotchman said of a liturgical service in a cathedral: "It is all very fine, but a dreadful thing to have on the Sabbath."

Dr. Edward Traill Horn (1850-1915) was the youngest of the three, being but thirty-four years of age when he entered upon this work. A graduate of Pennsylvania College and of the Philadelphia Seminary, he succeeded Dr. Bachmann as pastor of St. John's Church, Charleston, S. C. Many solid articles in the *Lu-*



*theran Church Review* and other church periodicals attest his thorough scholarship. As secretary of the sub-committee, the first and final preparation of material was in his hands. He held the balance of power and used it with rare effectiveness. His initiative and energy pushed the project to completion, and his taste and judgment determined many important details. In 1897 he became pastor of Trinity Church, Reading, Pa., and in 1911 he was called to the Philadelphia Seminary (Mt. Airy) as professor of Ethics and Missions. His scholarship encompassed the full round of theology. His powers of clear and concise literary expression were unequalled.

The Common Service was well received generally. There was some bitter but ineffective opposition. The momentum of centuries was behind it and the church itself, now well established in American life, was eager for common forms expressing the faith of the fathers in the language of the land. Some synods and congregations were better prepared to introduce it than others, but it speedily made its way among the three general bodies and into the English-speaking constituencies of other synods.

#### DEVELOPMENTS OF IMPORTANCE

The success of the Common Service led to a desire for a common hymnal and common Orders for Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, etc. The Joint Committee was continued. New English translations of the Augsburg Confession and of Luther's Small Catechism were prepared and considerable work was done on a hymnal. A strong doctrinal consciousness was everywhere developing. In 1909 the General Council conformed its text of the Common Service to the Standard Edition and invited the co-operation of the General Synod and the United Synod in the South in an effort to publish the work without a single variation and to prepare a Common Service Book. This invitation was promptly accepted. The Joint Committee met in Philadelphia November 1, 1910. Dr. Luther D. Reed presented the challenge of the project in a paper which stated: "Never before in any land or in any country of its history has the Lutheran Church attempted to pre-



pare a Service Book and Hymnal of such comprehensive character to meet the devotional needs of its congregations and people throughout such a vast extent of territory as it contemplated in the task immediately before us."

The Joint Committee now entered upon work which occupied eight years. There were four major problems: the unification of the text of the Common Service itself, with revision of minor provisions; the preparation of a Hymnal; the preparation of Orders for the Occasional Services; and the preparation of musical settings for the entire work. Sub-committees were appointed, each one designating a small group of its active members to make preliminary studies. Unity and balance were secured by having the Secretary of the Joint Committee (Dr. Reed) serve as a member of each sub-committee and act as its secretary.

The Committee on Hymnal explored the entire field of English hymnody, including translations from the Greek, Latin, German, Swedish, Danish, and Icelandic. It also secured new hymns and translations. The Committee on Music investigated the traditional music to the liturgy, the freer work of individual editors and composers, and the comparative usage of tunes in the best edited hymnals in the English-speaking world. A number of original tunes was contributed, particularly by Dr. J. F. Ohl, whose other services in arranging the first musical setting for the liturgy and in general editorial supervision of the music were invaluable. The Committee on the Liturgy prepared additional Introits, Collects, and Lessons. The selection of Psalms was modified, a new arrangement of the History of the Passion (the work of Dr. J. C. Mattes), and new Tables of Daily Lessons were adopted. Agreement was reached upon fourteen Occasional Services in connection with which the Joint Committee recognized the "unparalleled contributions of labor and learning" made by Dr. Henry E. Jacobs. Thus the work was brought to completion. An editorial sub-committee carried the text and music editions through the press.

The Joint Committee of 1910-1917 was a representative body. Of its thirty-eight members, five were heads of theological seminaries and three were presidents of general bodies. Eight others



were professors of theology. The remainder were pastors, editors, and executives in all parts of the church. Of the thirty-eight, only ten are living. Of these I shall mention but two: Dr. J. F. Ohl, now in his eighty-ninth year, still vigorous in mind and spirit though paralyzed in body, and Dr. Frederick H. Knubel, the honored president of the church.

The Common Service distilled the devotional experiences of the church from the days of the Apostles to its own times in clear canticles of praise and perfect prayers; it was a work full-bodied and complete, at least in its textual provisions. The principles which determined its preparation rejected the local and the temporary and gave classic expression to the complete services of the church.

As presented in the *Common Service Book* it contains features seldom found in other Lutheran liturgies of today, and not found in the Anglican services at all. Luther was a musician, Archbishop Cranmer was not. The Lutheran Reformers did everything possible to preserve the choral elements with their musical settings. Consequently the Common Service has proper Introits for every Sunday and special service and a complete series of Graduals, Antiphons, and Responsories. There is also a full series of Occasional Services. These provisions are so complete because the "consensus of the pure Lutheran liturgies of the sixteenth century" includes the Latin as well as the German, Swedish, and other vernaculars. Luther's Latin Service and the Latin portions of many sixteenth century Orders and choir books supplied forms which eventually dropped from Lutheran services in many districts when the vernacular was fully introduced. These features were unobjectionable in themselves. Their omission was occasioned by difficulties of translation and the necessity of simplification to meet local conditions. The Common Service, taking an objective view of the entire field, restored the full order of the church, and, in the words of its own Preface, presented "the complete Lutheran Service with all its provisions for all who desire to use it." The church has never produced in any land or time another vernacular liturgy so full bodied and completely developed. Lutheran services



in the sixteenth century in German and Swedish cities were as complete, but they were only partly in the vernacular, with choral and other features in Latin.

#### VIGOROUS POWERS

Many factors contribute to the molding of the church's thought and life. Combined influences are difficult to disentangle, and we must be careful not to claim too much. After making all allowances, however, we must credit results of great importance to the introduction and use of the Common Service.

The name includes several ideas: first, common prayer in the sense of public worship; secondly, common agreement in the matter of Lutheran principles and forms; and finally, connection with the deeper and older foundations in a consensus of historic Christianity which includes the essential and universal features of common worship found in the services of the early church. All of these conceptions have been deeply impressed upon the consciousness of Lutherans throughout the land by the restoration of the church's historic service.

The rule under which the service was prepared was not only historically correct but practically wise. It lifted the entire work above individual preference or taste, or the mere effort to reconcile imperfect and conflicting uses. Common understanding, agreement, and use were only possible because of this wise principle of procedure, a principle which later pointed the way to further cooperation and helped attain organic union.

The Common Service immediately drew the constituencies of the three general bodies closer together. It provided, perhaps beyond the thought of its earliest sponsors, a bond and basis for a common churchly development. Appreciation of their common birth-right quickened a common spirit and endeavor. All sections began to study it. Other synods and general bodies, appreciative of the impersonal and objective principles which controlled its preparation, secured permission to use it. The Iowa Synod, the Joint Synod of Ohio, the Missouri Synod, the Norwegian Synods, and later the Augustana Synod and the Icelandic Synod provided it



for their English services. Its immediate acceptance by all groups was a recognition of its representative quality, and an indication that American Lutherans desired to employ again the rich forms which their fathers had used in the formative period of the church's history and which later developments had obscured or destroyed. A church which had been confused in its thinking, unfamiliar with its own history, uncertain of its objectives, and weak in its organization was brought to self-respect and united endeavor. Translations, in whole or in part, in Telugu, Japanese, Spanish, and Italian carried it into the mission fields and helped make widely separated brethren in many lands conscious of their unity with the church in America. When we also remember the extensive literature and the many musical works it called forth, we may well ask whether any other single achievement in the past fifty years has had comparable results in elevating and unifying the entire church.

In addition we must recall the general promotion of liturgical study, the organization of the Lutheran Liturgical Association in Pittsburgh, in 1898, the founding of various local liturgical societies in more recent years, the establishment of a chair of Liturgics and Church Art in the Philadelphia Seminary, etc. The work of standing committees of the church is also a direct result—the Common Service Book Committee, the Committee on Church Music, and the Committee on Church Architecture. The publications prepared by the Common Service Book Committee—particularly the *Family Service Book*, *Hymns and Prayers for Church Societies*, the *Parish School Hymnal*, additional *Occasional Services*, *Collects and Prayers*, etc.—are a direct extension of the spirit and work of the framers of the Common Service. “By their fruits ye shall know them,” and by such effective and life-giving influence over wide areas we can estimate the vitality and worth of this enterprise.

#### FAIR FORM

The Common Service, and the *Common Service Book* as well, are representative of the church's highest ideals and spirit. Con-



sistent and complete, they attain excellence in form, and their purpose, recalling Muhlenberg's ideal of "one church, one book," spans the continent. This claim to representative character is strengthened when we recall the kind and quality of Service Books which our church, in America and in Europe, possessed in the period before 1888.

The *Book of Worship* of the General Synod (8th edition, 1880) contained only sixteen pages of liturgical material. The morning service included a Confession lifted bodily from the *Prayer Book* of the Episcopal Church; it contained some historical elements, but they were at times in unhistorical order. There was no provision whatever for the Introits, Collects, Epistles, and Gospels of the Church Year, nor was any liturgical order provided for the Holy Communion. The hymns were largely subjective and frequently Calvinistic in character.

The *Book of Worship* of the United Synod in the South contained a fuller liturgical service with definite recognition of the historic Gospels and Epistles and a few Introits of mixed character. The church festivals were provided with lengthy prayers. The Holy Communion contained historic liturgical elements but was separated from the usual morning service and placed among the "Ministerial Acts." The naive way in which historical material was occasionally introduced may be illustrated by what, it must be admitted, is an extreme example. One of the so-called "Introits" reads: "Let us commence our religious exercises in the Name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth," to which the congregation responded by singing the Gloria Patri! Subjective and Calvinistic elements preponderated in the hymnal.

The General Council, while homogeneous doctrinally, was diverse linguistically with services in German, Swedish, and English. Its English *Church Book* of 1868 approximated historic liturgical and hymnological ideals, but lacked completeness. It contained a morning service and Holy Communion developed upon the structure of the Church Year, with historic Gospels and Epistles, proper Prefaces, etc. Only a selection of Introits and Collects in season groups was given. The edition of 1870, in



which the influence of Dr. Seiss and Dr. Krauth was felt, included a more complete series of Introits and Collects. There was no provision for Matins and Vespers. Its hymnal was the best which the church had produced up to that time, and subsequent editions improved the book in every particular.

The Lutheran State Churches in Germany presented a varied pattern, more or less complete, of recovered historical elements. Most of the liturgies, however, were marked by definite provincialisms. None attained universal stature or influence.

The Common Service lifted the church in America out of liturgical provincialism and nationalism. It provided a liturgy—later supplemented by the Occasional Services and the Hymnal of the Common Service Book—of universal scope and influence; not partially developed as were most of the Reformation Orders, but complete; thoroughly American in breadth of view and provision for practical usability by the people, and yet not merely American—the typical historic Lutheran liturgy in the English language, more fully representative of Lutheranism in its best estate than any other that can be named.

This representative character is shown not only by fidelity to history and completeness, but also by literary excellence. In all these respects, though not in extent of use, the *Common Service Book* well sustains comparison with a similar work whose merits have been acclaimed for four centuries—the *English Book of Common Prayer*.

The *Book of Common Prayer* and the Common Service stem from the same tree—the historic liturgy of the western church. While the specialist will recognize great differences, they have practically the same lessons for the parts of the Church Year which they have in common, and many of their responses, canticles, prayers, and propers are identical. The material included in the Common Service is completely justified by Lutheran precedent and agreeable to Lutheran doctrine, but the form in which much of it appears is that first given to the English speaking world in the *Prayer Book* of 1549. Certain features, such as the Psalms, a



number of independent translations, original Collects, etc., are entirely different from the forms in the *Prayer Book*.

It will readily be understood why the Gospels and the Epistles should appear in the Authorized Version, and why such liturgical commonplaces as the Lord's Prayer, the Creeds, the great Canticles, and many of the Collects should be given in the *Prayer Book* forms hallowed by centuries of use and association. In thus supplying the English dress for much of the material common to both communions, the *Prayer Book* repaid in the nineteenth century the debt which its framers owed to the Lutheran Church Orders of the sixteenth century. Apart from this, however, the point to be noted is that the independent translations, the original material, the rubrical directions, and the general spirit and tone of the Common Service and the *Common Service Book* have the same character and quality as that of the older English liturgy. They express the same churchly feeling in forms of comparable literary value. The services as a whole, in their literary aspects, are not a patch-work but a single woven garment of prayer and praise.

#### PROMISE OF FUTURE GROWTH AND INFLUENCE

The movement which produced the Common Service and the *Common Service Book* is not a spent force. Church life in our own communion in Europe today is sadly confused. But even there active minorities are pursuing liturgical studies and calling the church to renewed appreciations of common worship and a deepened spiritual life. The Anglican communion has just revised its liturgies in England, Scotland, and America. The Oxford Movement, after a full century, has restored the general type of worship which was the common possession of the Church of England and of the Lutheran Church in Europe in the sixteenth century, and there is no diminution of interest in the subject.

In the Roman Church there is wide-spread activity, particularly in the effort to have the traditional usages of the church more generally understood and participated in by the laity, and also to promote cultivation of historic and churchly types of liturgi-



cal music. In the free churches there is a movement which recognizes the fact that overemphasis upon the sermon often leaves worship itself without form and void. This movement seeks to recover lost qualities of dignity, reverence, and beauty and "an awareness of the Presence of God." In our own communion we have the purpose and unity which doctrinal definiteness and historical continuity alone can assure. Our people share in the cultural developments which bring appreciation of art, music, and architecture into the smallest communities and make men and women dissatisfied with crudity. But beyond all this, which is more or less on the surface, the Lutheran Church has always cherished a theory of worship based upon the objective principle of the supremacy of the Word and the efficacy of the Means of Grace as proclaimed and administered in public services with a high development of popular participation. This means liturgical worship. In our communion there will always be a liturgical movement, for liturgical practice, development, and reform are all expressions of the living church.

This movement holds promise of future growth and influence chiefly because of its evangelical emphasis and energy. The liturgy is a great art form. Its essential quality, however, is not its formality. The essence of the liturgy is its objective presentation of the whole Gospel of Christ and its character as the prayer of the whole body of Christ. It constantly points to the innermost heart of the Gospel and expresses the purest beliefs and hopes of Christendom. As we use it the trivial and secular fall away. It ushers us into the presence of ultimate spiritual reality. I may not linger to stress this point except to repeat a remark made several years ago by a distinguished professor in one of the larger theological seminaries usually regarded as "liberal." He said: "You Lutherans may well thank God for your liturgy." We certainly should recognize, as he did, that the liturgy and liturgical worship bind individual congregations and the whole church to Christ and "the whole Gospel."



## CALL TO THANKSGIVING AND FURTHER ENDEAVOR

This anniversary celebration sounds a clear call to thanksgiving and challenges us to further endeavor. We should not only commemorate what was done fifty years ago, but resolve to make the fullest use of our recovered inheritance. This will mean earnest study of a large field—the liturgy itself, church music, church architecture, and liturgical art. It will mean awakening interest among our pastors, organists, choir members, and intelligent laymen. It will mean programs of education, study courses, addresses, and discussions in seminaries, colleges, and congregations. A much more adequate literature, both scientific and popular, will be required. Those qualified by gifts and knowledge should supply the church's need.

The whole church should strive to bring our general churchmanship up to the standards maintained by the Reformers and proposed by the Common Service. The Common Service was far ahead of the church in 1888. It was no compromise product designed to meet average ideas or practices. In its complete provisions it held aloft a type of service once usual but long forgotten.

In many particulars the Common Service is still ahead of the church. I am not thinking of the fact that, while more than three quarters of a million copies of the *Common Service Book* have been sold, many of our congregations have not introduced it. I have in mind the further fact that, with all the progress we have made, the best of our liturgical and musical practice today does not approach in richness, correctness, and consistency the average attained by Lutheran congregations in the cities of Germany and Sweden during the lifetime of the Reformers—which was the standard provided for, textually at least, by the Common Service of 1888.

The Common Service and the *Common Service Book* are not reactionary works. Theirs is the spirit of progressive conservatism. The framers of the Common Service were able churchmen, resourceful, forceful leaders of their own time. They had unbounded faith in the future. In endeavoring to recover and make serviceable the finest liturgical expressions of the past, they were



conservative; in constructing the Common Service and securing its adoption and introduction they were progressive. Some of our congregations have not yet caught up with their program or understood its spirit; none of us has completely realized the possibilities contained in the logical completion of their work.

The Common Service was a purely literary effort. The liturgy was set forth in admirable English dress. There was, however, no adequate study of its proper music or ceremonial, or of the liturgical requirements of the church building in which it was to be used. Nor did the *Common Service Book*, thirty years later, attempt to cover all areas in this field. It supplied only the simplest musical forms for congregational use. It provided no music whatever for choral parts, such as chants for the Psalms or settings for the Introits, Graduals, Antiphons, Responsories, etc. It made no pronouncements upon proper architectural appointments. Its rubrical directions were limited to the simplest and most necessary observances.

The wisdom of this procedure, whether understood at the time or not, has been fully justified. The church has been won to an appreciation of essential values without having to engage in endless controversies over non-essentials. Now that the text and some of its traditional music are well established, greater attention may be given to accuracy, consistency, and refinement of rendition.

The genius of Lutheranism reacts against externality and insincerity. The simplicity and forthrightness of our liturgy requires corresponding qualities in its setting and rendition. Overelaboration, fussy decoration, excessive ceremonial, concertistic music are all out of harmony with the Lutheran understanding. A strong sense of historic values and of what is inherently worshipful, distinctive, and beautiful is, however, entirely in the Lutheran spirit. Creative activity, controlled by established principles, should be encouraged. We must expect the liturgy itself to receive minor revisions and possibly some development. Use and criticism will lead to compression and elimination—particularly, I hope, in some of the Occasional Services. New Collects and prayers will meet new needs. In the hymnal there certainly will be subtrac-



tions and additions. Perhaps the church in this country may even hope, at some time in the future, to satisfy the desire of many in every period by composing a really adequate Eucharistic Prayer for the Communion Office.

The entire field of Plain Song, as yet invaded by only a few explorers, lies before our musicians. No church in Christendom has a clearer right to enter this and take possession. We gave the congregational chorale to the Christian world, but few of our choirs and congregations have an intimate acquaintance with this great body of church song. Our organists and composers will find admirable texts in the Liturgy for new settings to Introits, Graduals, Antiphons and Responsories. No other Protestant communion offers in its liturgy so rich and wide an opportunity for musical development.

Our hope is that this wonderful music and this dignified and objective, yet rich and warm, type of worship which was the common possession of our church centuries ago may soon become the prized possession of all our people in our own land and time.

A word of caution should temper our zeal. True development will be a balanced effort. We can expect good practice and progress only from those who study and love the liturgy, its music, and its proper architecture. We should encourage interest and endeavor in all these fields. We should also have patience with the enthusiasm and the zeal of youth as some of our juniors strive to lift the services of their congregations to higher levels. This will only balance the patience we frequently have to extend to the indifference and immobility of age and its frequent refusal to abandon individualistic and incorrect practices.

Half a century ago the black gown was anathema in many of our congregations; the placing of a cross upon the altar—if indeed there was an altar—would have split the congregation. We realize how far we all have come when we now find responsive services, chancels, altars, crosses, vested choirs, and clerical gowns in churches of the so-called non-liturgical communions. These features have long since been welcomed again by our congregations. Because of special conditions or unusual musical and artistic at-



tainments, some congregations, particularly in the larger cities, may desire, and are prepared to maintain, services of a fuller and more ornate type than others. None of us should be too greatly disturbed if pastors prefer the ancient and definitely ecclesiastical surplice and stole to the later provincial black academic gown; if on festivals an occasional altar glows with many lights or a processional cross be carried before the choir; if a choirmaster revives interest in Plain Song and the *a cappella* compositions of our old masters; or if efforts be made to have more frequent administrations of the Holy Communion. With respect to the latter we all must know that Luther and the other eminent leaders of the sixteenth century would be stirred to the depths by the casual consideration given the Sacrament in some of our congregations with but four, or fewer, celebrations a year!

With this understood, it is nevertheless true that too aggressive an emphasis upon externalities, such as vestments, lights, ceremonial, etc., may disturb the balanced order of congregational life and threaten the peace and unity of the whole church. Minor matters which seem so important to extremists today are often meaningless after the lapse of centuries, or else are filled with a meaning which we cannot accept.

Worship is a means to an end. It must establish men and women in communion with God and in the fellowship of the saints. If the strongest impression that remains after a service is one of liturgical technique, that service has been a failure. Exaggerated concern for precise and perfect observance of traditional detail cannot satisfy men and women seeking sincerity and strength. Ritualism which magnifies detail, and individualism which ignores common usage, are both extremes. Good churchmen will demonstrate a healthy interest in a well-rounded program of church life and work. They will seek to consolidate the gains of previous liturgical development, to conduct the church's service in the church's way, and to unite and elevate the entire church in a broad advance rather than to bring individual congregations to extremely high and spectacular performances.



The real significance of this anniversary of the Common Service is possibly not the laudation of our liturgy or of the men who prepared it. Does it not rather lie in the recognition of worship itself and its importance in the church's life?

As we observe this significant anniversary and recall with thanksgiving the eminent services of distinguished leaders of the past, let us dedicate ourselves to the rewarding task of promoting serious study of the principles, history, and literature of Christian worship as well as of the details of our own services. Let us strive to maintain services which liturgically and musically shall be representative of our best traditions and ideals. Let every part be correctly rendered, whether the service itself be simple or ornate. A program of such breadth, depth, and sincerity will enable the art of worship to flower naturally and beautifully among us in an atmosphere of spiritual reality. Faith and worship will keep the heart strong for service, and rich fruits of consecrated endeavor will crown the church's future.